

Historical Note on Dangali, a Gakkhar Stronghold on the River Jhelum

Dangali is one of the oldest settlements of the Gakkhars in the Pothohar region. A legend from the Delhi sultanate era attributes the establishment of Dangali to a Gakkhar chief who was an avid falconer. One day while hunting, he crossed the river Jhelum and let loose his bird of prey. Unable to catch any game, he was impressed by the tenacity of wild fowl in this territory and decided to bring it under his control. He only succeeded by confronting and overpowering the original inhabitants and ever since Dangali has remained a Gakkhar stronghold [1, 2].

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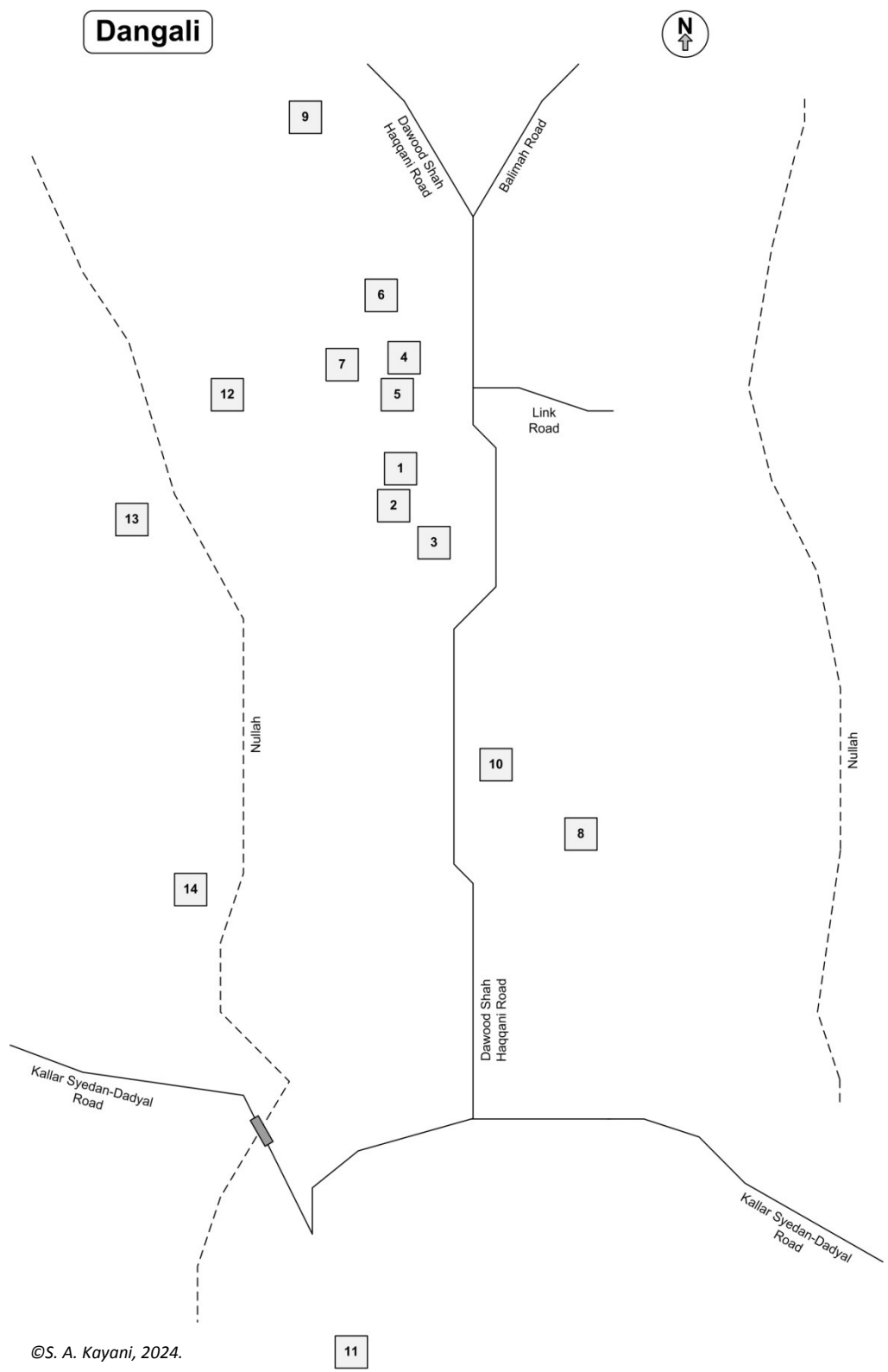
During the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605), when Pothohar was split into smaller administrative units, Dangali was formed as a parganah of the Sindh Sagar sarkar of the Lahore subah. The eponymous village of Dangali became the de-facto capital of the newly formed parganah [3, 4].

The current spelling and pronunciation of the name of the village Dangali is Dhangali. The village Dhangali is now a part of the Samote union council of the Kallar Syedan tehsil of the Rawalpindi district. The spelling that has been most frequently used in the historical literature to refer to both the parganah and the present-day village is Dangali. I have used the conventional name and the spelling whenever I mention the name of the erstwhile parganah or the historical village of Dangali whereas if I make a reference to the present-day village, I use its current name. Dangali was noted for its wealth and power during the Mughal era and was referred to as a town by the period chroniclers [5].

Dangali was located on the northern periphery of the parganah of Dangali while the village Sultanpur (Dina), now inundated due to construction of the Mangla dam, formed the southern edge of the former parganah. The river Jhelum passes at a distance of a little over one mile to the east of the village Dhangali. It has been reported by the older residents of the village that prior to the construction of the Mangla dam, a faint roar of the river Jhelum was regularly heard at Dhangali. These days the river only makes a noise when in flood.

I had the opportunity to visit the village Dhangali multiple times during the years 2022-24 and endeavored to document and photograph the extant archeological remains that once formed a part of the historical Dangali. A list of the archeological remains that have been documented has been included in the following table and each remain has been identified by a unique numeral inside a square box on a preliminary archeological map of Dangali shown as the figure labeled 1 below. The list of the archeological remains in the following table is accompanied with

brief notes that describe the key features of the remains and highlight their historical context or significance.



Sr. No.	Archeological Remain	Brief Description	Conservation Status
1.	Central Mansion	The remains of a large mansion are located in the center of the present-day village of Dhangali. A wall of the erstwhile mansion built using semi-dressed stone masonry on the north has survived somewhat intact as shown in the photograph labeled 2 below. A section of the wall to the east and the foundations of the mansion are extant and have been incorporated in the small residential structures that have been erected on the site of the ruins. The mansion was built on the crest of an undulating ridge and the wall located along the edge to the west in its southern extremity would have required reinforcement.	Poor
2.	Supporting Wall and Bastion near Central Mansion	A supporting wall and a bastion constructed using rubble stone masonry supported the southern edge of the western side of the central mansion. When viewed from a distance, the supporting wall and the bastion as a whole would have resembled a battlement. Support rather than defense was the principle reason behind erecting these two structures.	Good
3.	Stables	In the close vicinity of the central mansion, two structures, a small vaulted room and a large hall with arched recesses, have been generally identified as the stables. Presently, these buildings are being used for storing farm implants and for keeping livestock. The small vaulted room still has the old ceiling constructed using what appears to be Mughal era bricks but the roof of the large hall has been replaced with a modern one. In spite of the fact that the arched recesses located inside the large hall have been disturbed by decades of ill treatment, their original structure remains intact.	Poor
4.	Family Mausoleum of Gakkhar Chiefs	In the present-day village of Dhangali, the walled enclosure that houses the grave of the saint Dawood Shah Haqqani is in actual fact a family mausoleum of the Gakkhar chiefs. The saint is also known by another variation of his name i.e. Dodah Mard Haqqani. Dawood Shah Haqqani is in all likelihood Diwan Allahdad Khan, son of the Gakkhar chief Sultan Murad Quli Khan, who became an ascetic [1, 2, 6]. The mausoleum was probably reserved as a burial site for the ordinary members and womenfolk of the	Good

		<p>ruling family of the parganah of Dangali. Later on, after the decline of the Gakkhars, this mausoleum, which already had an ascetic's grave in it became an object of veneration and multiple legends and myths became associated with the person of Diwan Allahdad Khan. The Gakkhar chronicle Kaigoharnama has very little to say about the life and times of Diwan Allahdad Khan [1, 2]. At some point in his life prior to his transformation, he must have served the Mughal empire as part of the family tradition and may have been appointed a mansabdar. He was significant enough that his daughter's hand was given in marriage to the prince Muhammad Akbar, fourth son of the Mughal emperor Alamgir (1618-1707) in 1676 [7]. His father's influence and legacy as a loyal and committed high ranking state official may have played a deciding role in realizing this matrimonial union. The historical context of the mausoleum, its location, and architecture, all point towards a provenance that is strongly linked with the Gakkhars and their time-hallowed connection with Dangali.</p>	
5.	Supporting Wall and Bastions near Family Mausoleum of Gakkhar Chiefs	<p>A supporting wall and two bastions have been constructed to reinforce the western side of the family mausoleum of the Gakkhar chiefs. Unlike the single bastion located near the central mansion, these bastions have been constructed using dressed stone masonry and covered with plaster. The plaster has fared extremely well over the course of years but it has changed its color to a darker hue under the influence of natural weathering processes.</p>	Good
6.	Mausoleum	<p>In the vicinity of the family mausoleum of the Gakkhar chiefs, a regular mausoleum is situated, which has been recently attributed to Rani Mangho, wife of Diwan Allahdad Khan [8]. Apparently this attribution has been made without any historical evidence. Rani Mangho served as regent till the majority of her eldest son, Sultan Dilawar Khan, who would later become the hereditary Gakkhar chief of the Parganah Pharwala. The antiquity of the mausoleum is unknown. We can only assume that it was constructed to house the mortal remains of one or more Gakkhar chiefs who ruled parganah Dangali along with other areas of Pothohar while serving the Mughal empire as high ranking mansabdars</p>	Poor

		during the 16-18 th centuries.	
7.	Rectangular Well	A well, rectangular in shape, is located near the mausoleum and close to a foot track leading to the village situated to the west of Dangali across the nullah. The peculiar shape of the well indicates that this is an old step-well that has been remodeled. The well is functional and being regularly used by the local population.	Good
8.	South Mansion	The remnants of a large mansion are situated in the south of the present-day village of Dhangali. The mansion is positioned on the edge of a steep ridge. The outer and inner walls of the mansion constructed using semi-dressed stone masonry have survived. Some of these walls have been decorated with small alcoves. The eastern wall of the mansion has a window opening, which offers a panoramic view of the surrounding area and a distant glimpse of the river Jhelum.	Poor
9.	Mosque (North)	The remains of a mosque are located to the north of the present-day village of Dhangali at the edge of a ridge. The mosque is in ruins and only small sections of the walls and the foundation of the structure are extant.	Poor
10.	Mosque (South)	This mosque is located on the edge of the high ground that overlooks the Dawood Shah Haqqani Road in the vicinity of the south mansion. The outer walls of the mosque have survived and a single decorative bastion is still intact. The walls have well built window openings for light and air and in a manner similar to the south mansion, some of the walls of the mosque have been decorated with small alcoves. To the east of the mosque, a large water reservoir might have once existed that would have served the mosque and the mansion alike.	Poor
11.	Pakka Bann	A small dam once existed at a site located at some distance from Dangali in the southward direction where three mountain streams converge and pass through a natural rock cutting as shown in the photograph labeled 3 below. One of these streams is the same that flows north to south and skirts the western boundary of the present-day village of Dhangali. The construction of the dam is attributed to Sultan Sarang Khan. The dam has since long disappeared under the action of the forces of nature and only two piers built using rubble stone survive as the remains of a once substantial structure.	Poor

		Incidentally, this dam was already in ruins when Raizada Diwan Dunichand made a note about its antiquity and general condition in the Kaigoharnama in 1724-25 [1, 2].	
12.	Passage Cut in Sandstone	A foot track that starts near the family mausoleum of the Gakkhar chiefs leads to the village located to the west of Dangali. The village can only be accessed after crossing the nullah. Along this foot track, not very far from where it starts, the pathway turns left and enters a narrow defile. It appears that the naturally occurring defile was laboriously widened over the course of centuries and a unique passage was carved out of sandstone. On either side of the passage, the sandstone walls bear tool marks that were once used to chisel through layers of sediment. This passage is approximately 200 ft. long and after exiting the defile, opens on high ground close to the nullah. In a historical context, the width of the passage would have limited its use to wayfarers or riders who have dismounted.	Good
13.	Ancient Cemetery-1	An ancient cemetery is situated opposite to the central mansion to the west of Dangali across the nullah. The cemetery has been thoroughly covered by undergrowth and trees, and it is barely discernible from a distance. Inside the cemetery, which covers a substantial area, a large number of graves are present. Some of these graves are located inside walled enclosures and an open mausoleum with a mihrab and two decorative bastions on its western side has been identified as well. A number of graves inside the cemetery can be clearly identified as belonging to men by the presence of the distinctive turban feature as the headstone. It has also been reported by the residents of Dhangali that some of the graves in the cemetery had been constructed with built-in stairways that lead to the bottom of the graves.	Poor
14.	Ancient Cemetery-2	A second ancient cemetery is located on the high ground opposite to the south mansion to the west of Dangali across the nullah. The cemetery covers a sizeable area, however, the graves are thinly dispersed and appear to be of an antiquity that is later to that of the ancient cemetery that is situated opposite to the central mansion.	Poor



After the decline of the Gakkhar influence in Pothohar, the parganah of Dangali was taken over by the Sikh chiefs of the Bhangi Misl. During the early years of the rule of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), Sardar Jodh Singh Attariwala, a former associate of the Sikh chiefs of the Bhangi Misl, was granted large tracts of territory in the parganah of Dangali as jagir. When Sardar Jodh Singh passed away, his son Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala, the well known Sikh civil administrator and military commander who fought against the British during the second Anglo-Sikh war, retained the major part of his father's estates [9]. Dangali fell into oblivion during the Sikh era. It is likely that its residents were forced to disperse and their property was

vandalized by the tenants brought in by the Sikh administrators to work the fertile agricultural land in and around Dangali.

In 1823, the British explorer William Moorcroft, while returning from Kashmir for his onward journey to Afghanistan, noted in his personal diary that the town of Dangali located on the right bank of the river Jhelum was the stronghold of the Gakkhar chief (Sultan Sarang Khan) who took a stand for the cause of the exiled Mughal emperor Humayun (1508-1556). He further noted that the town was filled with ruins of old buildings but none of them was of any architectural significance [10].

In 1847, in the aftermath of the first Anglo-Sikh war, James Abbott passed through Dangali while travelling to Rawalpindi on a land revenue survey assignment as boundary commissioner. He stopped and set camp in a ravine that was dominated by a building in ruins that he identified as the 'old Gukka palace' in his official journal [11]. It is likely that the building that has been referred to by James Abbott is the central mansion described at serial no. 1 in the preceding table.

The famed colonial official and military commander John Nicholson, while engaged in the settlement of the land revenue of the Kallar Syedan area as assistant to the British resident in Lahore, visited Dangali in early 1848. He has reported the presence of the remains of large mansions attributed to Gakkhar chiefs in the official account of his visit. He also noted the hilly nature of the terrain and the difficult passage that led to Dangali [12].

A rudimentary list of the archeological remains in Dangali was published for the first time in 1875 as part of a compendium on historical sites in the Punjab region [13]. Very few authors or researchers have written about the historical or archeological significance of Dangali over the years [14, 15]. It is not known whether a formal archeological survey by the provincial or federal archeology departments has ever been conducted at Dangali as no research reports are publically available. Without a doubt, no village in Pothohar can boast a historical legacy like Dhangali. It is the need of the hour that all archeological sites at Dangali should be surveyed in detail and systematically preserved.

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